

Georgian Central **Soil & Crop Improvement Association** ***November Bulletin, 2023***

Serving Members of Bruce, Dufferin, Grey & North Simcoe Counties



*Left photo: Grey SCIA member Don Ready and his grandson
Right photo: Don's wife, Moira Trant, daughter Erika, and the twins*

Appreciation is extended to the following Partner Sponsors:



HURON TRACTOR



Member Spotlight

Written by: Don Ready, member of the Grey County Soil and Crop Improvement Association

West Toronto was my home for my first 20 years but I loved the outdoors more than the city so after getting a degree in agronomy from Guelph, I bought 140 acres in the Beaver Valley in 1978. The learning curve was very steep and stressful, especially in 1982 when I was paying 23% on operating capital and the bank froze my account. We were bankrupt but I was too stubborn and stupid to sign the papers.

Somehow we made it through and paid everyone off. I feel a similar situation is happening now in the economy but it will be worse this time.



Highland Farms soy harvest.

In the late 80s, I started no-tilling and within about 5 years all acres were no-tilled. The silty clay loams here are very prone to erosion and this eliminated 95% of that. Tile drains were a huge help too. Thank you to the pioneers who perfected the system and equipment for no-till.

I grow IP or GMO soys, winter wheat, barley or oats with red clover, and hay. Cover crops this year included cereal rye for next year's beans and barley/oats/buckwheat. Corn will come back in if I buy my own no-till planter. My career is ending so I am down to 250 acres of crops. Very rarely do I sell straw. It is finely chopped and well spread to feed my livestock; the worms and microbes. One year, a part of the field yielded

270 bu of corn. I looked at the residue and thought, how will I plant soys into this? The next year, the worms had almost



No-till oats in April.

cleared the ground! I no longer broadcast because the seed disappears before it can grow.

I have drastically reduced my use of poisons. Most plants I see in the wild areas are healthy and not ravaged by disease or insects. When scouting soys for aphids, I would find a few aphids in most places, then one plant that was totally

covered. It was weak and the insects knew it. My job is to promote health. I use naked seed, even for corn. I give the plants a boost with Biogold from AEA but I am still evaluating it. Liquid starter, 10-34-0, now gets chelated calcium and touch of boron. Calcium can keep waterlogged seedlings alive for 3 or 4 days longer, enough to make a dramatic difference when things get wet. Copper on wheat, oats and flax has made a difference for disease and stalk strength.

I will not match yields with someone who is pushing all the nutrients and pesticide inputs but my profit this year was good. Winter wheat yielded 103 bu. Inputs were moderate: naked seed (my own), biogold, 6 gpa of 10-34-0, broadcast 70-25-20-20S-1B, growth regulator with a touch of chelated Cu and B. One half was sprayed with fungicide by mistake. The prior crop was red clover or cover crop. The 60 and 80N plots yielded the same. IP soys had no broadcast fertilizer.

The wheat straw provided 110 lb of time release K, the best kind. I spent lots on herbicides and got 53bu. This should have been a bad white mold year, but I only found 4 infected plants even with no fungicide. No-till, good rotations and 15" rows really suppress white mold. I sprayed 80% of the soys for aphids but it was not needed. The brix increased and the aphids disappeared in a week on the unsprayed



Calcium comparison in oats.



Kildears love no-till and soy stubble!

Upcoming Events

acres too. Oats were poor this year on a difficult farm but as Meatloaf said: Two out of three ain't bad.

Forty plus years of soil and tissue testing have yielded a few surprises. The organic matter has held around 5% but not increased. No-till has protected it but cover crops, hay and manure could move it up as many have reported. My soils do not show big increases in P or K with large inputs. The rules of thumb such as 30lb of P will increase your test 1ppm do not work here. I am putting that money into biology.



The never ending rock removal.

It is a great time for agriculture with regenerative practices gaining in acres. Agriculture took a wrong turn when animals were separated from crops. The manure and hay are a vital part of the system. Gabe Brown has his soils tests increasing with no purchased fertilizer. Watch Young Red Angus on YouTube as he grows 200 bu corn with no N, only fungal compost. I would be interested in building a Johnson Su bioreactor to make this compost if I can find some partners. A heated shed is needed. Contact me if you are interested.

We have planted thousands of trees and kilometres of windbreaks. A few are large enough for harvest and our firewood is plentiful. They give me great pleasure but not as much as our 5 grandchildren. Spare time is rounded out with music, canoeing and skiing. Life is good. Organizing the Innovative Farmers of Ontario conference was a fantastic experience and I am grateful. I have been very fortunate to live in Canada, in a beautiful area, and raise my family here.

Thank you for this opportunity to think about my career.

I'd like to thank Don Ready for agreeing to be highlighted in our member spotlight article this issue. Not only was he willing to share his thoughts and experience with the region, he also wrote the article himself during a busy harvest season! We sincerely appreciate the time dedicated to the organization by Don, and the many other members who contribute articles, data and reports to keep us all informed!

- Emily McKague

- Advancing Woman in Ag East Conference** - Nov 19 - 21, 2023.
 - Ontario Young Farmers Forum** - Nov 20 & 21, 2023. Contact oyff@jfao.on.ca
 - OFA Annual General Meeting** - Nov 21 & 22, 2023.
 - Agricultural Excellence Conference** - Nov 21 - 23, 2023.
 - FCC Young Farmer Summit** - Nov 28, 2023, 10 am - 3:30 pm.
 - Rural Southwestern Ontario S.H.E.D. Talks Launch Featuring Wheat Pete** - Dec 1, 2023, 10 am - 1 pm.
 - North Simcoe SCIA AGM** - Dec 8, 2023, 10:30 am. Our Lady of Lourdes Church Hall, Elmvale. Contact John Nahuis for info.
 - Grey SCIA Winter Meeting** - Dec 15th, 2023, 10 am - 4 pm at the Rocklyn Hall. Contact info@greyagservices.ca for info.
 - Grey Bruce Farmers' Week** - Jan 3 - 9, 2024. In-person at the Elmwood Community Centre & livestreamed. www.gbfiw.ca
 - Ontario Agricultural Conference Virtual Kick Off** - Jan 3, 2024.
 - Ontario Agricultural Conference SWAC event** - Jan 4 & 5, 2024.
 - Ontario Agricultural Conference EOCC event** - Jan 16, 2024.
 - Ontario Agricultural Conference MWAC event** - Jan 19, 2024. www.ontarioagconference.ca for info on the above OAC events.
 - Bruce SCIA Winter Meeting** - Jan 18, 2024, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm at the Cargill Community Centre.
 - Guelph Organic Conference** - Jan 24 - 27, 2024.
 - What Did We Learn in 2023? What Should We Do in 2024?** - Feb 7, 2024, 1 - 4:30 pm at Grey Ag Services with Deb Campbell and Carrie Davenport. www.greyagservices.ca
 - Figuring out Frost Seeding** - Feb 7, 2024, 7 - 8 pm. Webinar with Christine O'Reilly. www.greyagservices.ca
 - Setting Up Calves for Success: Building Quality Along the Cow-Calf, Backgrounding and Feedlot Continuum.** - Feb 14, 2024, 10 am - 5 pm. Workshop at Grey Ag Services with a feedlot tour in the afternoon. Lunch included. www.greyagservices.ca
 - Fair is not Equal: Strategies and Challenges of Passing on the Farm** - Feb 15, 2024, 1:30 - 3:30 pm. Workshop at Grey Ag Services with Bob Scriven. www.greyagservices.ca.
 - Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario Conference** - Feb 21 - 22, 2024.
 - Grassland Bird Conservation on Farms** - Feb 24, 2024, 1:30 - 3:30 pm. Workshop at Grey Ag Services with Zoe Lebrun-Southcott, Dr. Andrew Campomizzi & Hanna Kirchmeir. www.greyagservices.ca.
 - The Fourth Crop: Winter Canola, Winter Barley & Edible Beans** - Feb 27, 2024, 1 - 3:00 pm at Grey Ag Services with Megan Moran, Stuart Wright & Adrian Op't Hoog. www.greyagservices.ca.
 - Variability of Corn Nitrogen Response Across the Soil Landscape** - Feb 29, 2024, 1 - 2 pm. Webinar with Ben Rosser, Jonathan Zettler, Caleb Niemeyer, and others. www.greyagservices.ca.
 - AgMaps - Mapping Your Farm** - Mar 5, 2024, 1 - 3 pm. Workshop at Grey Ag Services with Bob Steiss. www.greyagservices.ca.
- Many other Grey Ag Workshops are planned between February and April - go to www.greyagservices.ca for more info. Some in-person sessions will be livestreamed.*